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New Montclair Township Council sworn in

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BY DIANE HERBST

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THE MONTCLAIR TIMES

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Six new Montclair Township council members were sworn in on Sunday, along with the reelected 4th Ward councilwoman, signaling what they hope are four years of caring and determined leadership.

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"I would like to see some major redevelopment projects under way, I would like to see us have some major agreements with the surrounding municipalities for joint services," said

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Ed Koch, former New York City mayor, was a fighter and a funnyman

Jackson, a former Montclair mayor. "I'd also like us to position ourselves for a government that is responsive and open to the people, moving ahead in a very positive feeling about Montclair.

"Also I think we are making great progress with our educational system, financially and otherwise, and I'd like to see that momentum continue," Jackson said. "So if we have control over our property taxes, a clear plan for that, a plan to reduce our debt, I would be very gratified in four years."

When asked how he and the new council are going to reduce Montclair's debt, which Montclair's township manager has previously said is $220 million, Jackson said: "I think in the next four weeks, we'll have something very important to say about that."

STAFF PHOTO BY GEORGE WIRT

Shortly after they were sworn into office today, Sunday, July 1, members of the Montclair Township Council stand alongside one another at the council dais. From left are 1st Ward Councilman Bill Hurlock, 2nd Ward Councilwoman Robin Schlager, At-large Councilman Rich McMahon, Mayor Robert Jackson, Deputy Mayor and At-large Councilman Robert Russo, 3rd Ward Councilman Sean Spiller, and 4th Ward Councilwoman Renée Baskerville.

The upbeat swearing-in ceremony began several minutes before noon, in front of a packed, standing-room only audience in the Council Chambers.

"I've been doing this for 22 years now, and every four years we get to participate in this wonderful occasion," Township Clerk Linda Wanat told The Times. "It's one of my favorite things. They're all energized and they all showed during the campaign a real commitment to the town we all love."

Wanat first swore in Jackson to applause, followed by At-large Councilman and Deputy Mayor Robert Russo; At-large Councilman Rich McMahon; 1st Ward Councilman Bill Hurlock; 2nd Ward Councilwoman Robin Schlager; 3rd Ward Councilman Sean Spiller, and 4th Ward Councilwoman Renee Baskerville.

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Outgoing Mayor Jerry Fried, holding a gavel, said a few words of encouragement to the new council.

"I want to thank all the incoming council members for all the hard work you are going to do for the next four years," Fried said. "It's going to go really, really quickly."

Fried then handed the gavel to Jackson at 12:12 p.m.

Seated along the curved dais, all of the new council members spoke optimistically about their forthcoming term.

"Today we get sworn in," said Schlager. "Let's hope next week, we're not sworn at."

Following a brief meeting, the council members, their families, supporters, other elected officials and residents headed to the George Inness Annex at Montclair High School for a celebratory lunch of sandwiches, salads, and desserts.

"They're very energetic, they seem to be a cohesive group and it bodes well for the town of Montclair," said Assemblyman Thomas Giblin, himself a Montclair resident. "I'm very bullish about their leadership and what they can accomplish."

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